HITTING TOMORROW'S TOP 10 LISTS!

COMIC & CARD PICKS!

# VANTAGE™ COMIC & CARD PICKS

Inside information for comic dealers and collectors!

#11

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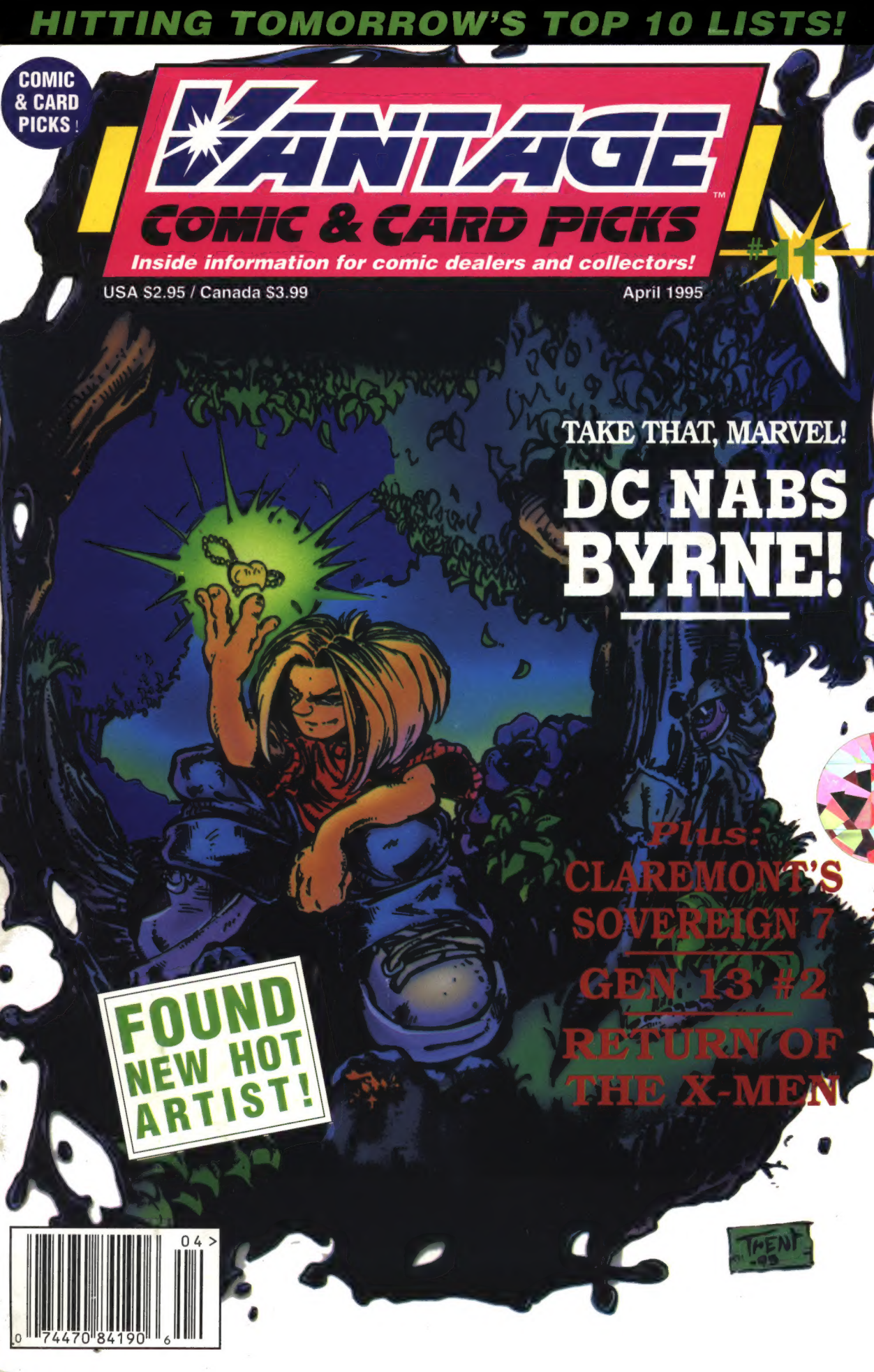
April 1995



TAKE THAT, MARVEL!

## DC NABS BYRNE!

Plus:

CLAREMONT'S SOVEREIGN 7

GEN 13 #2

RETURN OF THE X-MEN

FOUND NEW HOT ARTIST!

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#2
WE KNOW IT'S DIFFICULT WAITING FOR A BI-MONTHLY BOOK...
BUT WHAT CAN WE SAY?
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VANTAGE™
COMIC & CARD PICKS
number eleven

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**Vantage Comic & Card Picks**
**Volume One, Number 11,**
**April 1995.**

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Cover: Creed is © & ™ 1995 Trent Kanuga

## TOP PICKS OF THE MONTH

**Creed** #1-2 (Hall of Heroes / First appearance, unique & attractive style)
**Creed** #1 (Lightning Comics / June "retelling", unique & attractive style)
**Wonder Woman** #0, #85, 90-up (DC / Byrne after Deodato!)

## MORE VANTAGE PICKS

**Action Comics** #710 (DC / Unusual cover, death of true love)
**Aster** #0 (Express Publications / Entity Comics / Origin, Isabedra art, Perez cover)
**Generation X** #5 (Marvel / Two new members, hot series)
**Glory** #2 (Image / Extreme / Underplayed in **Previews**™, Deodato)
**Justice League America** #100 (DC / Anniversary issue)
**Knighthawk** #1-6 (Acclaim Comics / Windjammer / Neil Adams on time)
**Mickey Spillane's Mike Danger** #1 (Big Entertainment / Tekno•Comix / Miller cover)
**She-Bat** #1-2 (Acclaim Comics / Windjammer / Neil Adams on time)
**Spawn** #32 (Image / Todd McFarlane Productions / New costume)
**Spectacular Spider-Man** #226 (Marvel / True identity of real Peter Parker)
**Spider-Man** #60 (Marvel / True identity of Kaine)
**Union** #4 (Image / WildStorm / Leads into **Gen 13** #2)
**Wolverine** #91 (Marvel / Continues hot storyline)
**Wonder Woman** #1-up, both series (DC / Byrne to create new fans)

Watch for the Vantage Star indicating our top picks!

"The above pick list is a guide based on research, advisors' opinions, and staff opinions — keep in mind that even the experts will disagree. Comics can lose value after months or years. Read over the facts and opinions in Vantage, examine the pick list, and then make your own decisions. Remember: 1) There's no sure thing. Never bet the farm on any one book. 2) It may be fun to hunt for winners, but comics are even more fun to read! Open up one of those polybags and give comics a try!"
- Publisher Rob Golub

## VANTAGE LIKES WIZARD™

**Wizard** has tremendous power in this industry. **Wizard's** reports on the current state of the market often influence the market. For example, many dealers say that **Zorro** #3 was dead before **Wizard** placed it in their Top Ten List.

Although **Vantage** might write the **Wizard** Top Ten List a little differently, **Wizard** really has done an outstanding job of watching the market and we commend them for it. Some have asked us to publish our own Top Ten List, but that's not our end of the game. We peer into the future, not the present.

Using **Wizard** as a bellwether, we seem to be doing pretty well at peering into the future. **Gen 13, Shi, Generation X, Flash** #92, and **Wolverine** #75 are all former **Vantage** picks that sit on the Top Ten List in **Wizard** #43.

The **Wizard** #43 Market Watch talks about heat for "Terminal Velocity," **Spectre, Generation X, Robin** #0, **Prophet, New Mutants** Legion appearances, **X-Men** #41, **Amazing Spider-Man** #149-151, and the "Power and Responsibility" Spider-Man clone books. All of these things were predicted by **Vantage.**

In fact, we predicted almost everything in the **Wizard** #43 Market Watch section. Plus, **Wizard** #43 starts to hint at the importance of Mike Deodato, who we covered in-depth last issue.

To **Wizard** we say, Thanks guys for three-and-half years of hard work and a job well done. To ourselves we say, Stop gloating, you self-impressed mirror-boy. Yesterday is irrelevant. Let's talk about tomorrow…

— Rob Golub, Publisher

# GODWHEEL COVER SPLIT!

## IS MALIBU TOO SWEET FOR THE JOB?

**Godwheel** #3, which features the first appearance of Thor and Loki in the Ultraverse, has a 75% - 25% cover split with George Perez doing pencils on the 25% cover. **Vantage** listed **Godwheel** #3 as a "pick" two months ago.

In theory, a cover split focuses 100% of the demand on 25% of the print run. This is supposed to make the 25% book go up. Unfortunately, it doesn't always work this way. If something about the split tips demand back towards the 75% book, it won't work. Having seen both covers, we can honestly say the 25% Perez cover is good. However, the 75% cover is a really nice looking "bad girl" cover in its own right.

Unfortunately, this could hurt the promotion by drawing demand away from the 25% version. There was a similar problem with **Ultraforce** #2, where the 25% cover had a higher cover price, causing demand to even out between the two covers. Malibu always seems to forget the importance of focus, by watering down the demand for their limited items.

A similar mistake was made when Malibu first introduced the Ultraverse with coupons in certain books. Buy the books, remove each of the coupons, send 'em in together and get something cool. However, just as the books with the coupons were starting to heat up, Malibu came out with "Wild Card" coupons. These Wild Card coupons could replace any missing coupon, diluting demand for the books with the original coupons. The bottom line here is that Malibu may just be too nice, always giving something to consumers without regard to focus.

The irony is that in every other area of marketing, Malibu runs an A+ operation. It is only in aftermarket engineering that the company has fallen short since **Prime** #1. (Of course, they'll deny that they even watch the market at all.)

Still, **Godwheel** #3 is a nice-looking pick. Ultraverse fans will need it for sure. "**Godwheel** #3 is the single issue that sets up all future Marvel/Ultraverse story events for 1995 and beyond. This is the story that brings Thor and Loki into the Ultraverse and paves the way for **Rune/Silver Surfer** #1 in April," said Vice President-Editorial Chris Ulm.

**Godwheel** is the first official Marvel/Ultraverse crossover. **Godwheel** #3, with its cover split and the first appearance of Thor and Loki in the Ultraverse, celebrates the recent acquisition of Malibu by Marvel. The 25% cover is to feature Thor and Ultraverse characters by George Perez. The 75% cover features Lord Pumpkin, NecroMantra, and lots of pumpkins, with "bad girl" artwork by John Statema.

# DC DROPS THE BOMB!!

## BYRNE STARTS AFTER DEODATO!!

Mike Deodato Wonder Woman Art™ & © 1995 DC Comics

John Byrne will start writing and drawing **Wonder Woman** for DC with issue #101, immediately after Mike Deodato leaves the book for Marvel, **Vantage** has learned.

The deal has not been signed as we go to press, but sources close to the negotiations tell **Vantage** that it is all but certain.

Byrne is the original "bad girl" artist, having perfected his amazingly-rendered female drawings before some of today's "bad girl" artists were old enough draw. Byrne will stick with **Wonder Woman** for a year or more, our sources tell us.

Mike Deodato is the super-hot artist who has helped to double **Wonder Woman's** circulation in recent months. Deodato told **Vantage** last month that he plans to start an unnamed monthly title for Marvel, and leave **Wonder Woman** after issue #100.

Not to be outdone by Marvel's nab at Deodato, DC has wisely put Byrne on **Wonder Woman**. It was already gaining steam like a locomotive. While **Vantage** was previously excited about Deodato **Wonder Woman** back-issues, we were still concerned about the possibility that a poor artist afterwards might eventually slow demand.

The news that John Byrne will be penciling, inking, and writing **Wonder Woman** for at least a year puts us at ease. Byrne had left mainstream comics years ago, focusing on creator-owned projects at companies like Dark Horse and on pet projects like **She-Hulk** for Marvel. Byrne's tremendous talent buoyed sales in spite of the off-center nature of these creations.

However, it is on mainstream books like **Wonder Woman** where Byrne tends to really shine.

Although the "new" X-Men were introduced in **X-Men** #94 without Byrne, most experts agree that Byrne's addition to **X-Men** with issue #108 was instrumental to the success of the book. In fact, Byrne

John Byrne's Next Men™ & © 1995 John Byrne

and Claremont are arguably directly responsible for the entire **X-Men** phenomenon. Note that pre-Byrne issues heated up at the time as well.

Byrne spent years on **Fantastic Four**, heating the book up and restoring the book to its old glory. **Fantastic Four** books published since then compare so poorly that **Vantage** can't even look at them. Again, pre-Byrne issues saw a marked increase in after-market activity. **Fantastic Four** back-issues died when Byrne left and they have yet to recover.

Byrne's recreation of Superman was not met with strong market reaction, but **Vantage** believes that this can be attributed to overprinting and to the general overplay of **Superman**. (Don't ask us to explain **Superman** #75. Someday, you will all realize that you own about a thousand copies of this book each and you will all wonder why you want so much money for it.)

Byrne's work on **Wolverine** was incredibly hot. Again, pre-Byrne **Wolverine** issues and appearances heated up at the time. It seems likely that Byrne's incredible talent will do the same for **Wonder Woman**.

The **Vantage** crystal ball is telling. We see **Wonder Woman** growing in heat up to #100. Byrne picks up the baton where Deodato left off, and new readers who had never heard of Deodato go back for the back-issues. They have to, for Byrne's storyline is sure to relate to the recent big changes in Wonder Woman's life. Pre-Byrne issues are not only impossible to find, they're gorgeous. These Deodato **Wonder Woman** back-issues could turn out to be THE books to find in 1995-96. And they're sitting on the racks of your local comic shop right now, yours for cover price.

Oooooh... this is a good one. We're getting the shakes. It's the same feeling we had when we picked **Amazing Spider-Man** #149 before anyone else. This could be even bigger, and even longer-lasting.

Look at it this way: Deodato **Wonder Woman** books are now very low risk / high return, because they can heat up in two different ways: (1) Because of Deodato's work at Marvel, or (2) Because of Byrne's work on **Wonder Woman**.

Gee, we'd love to continue this article, but we really must go to our local comic shop to clean them out of **Wonder Woman**. You just sit here and keep reading, all nice and distracted, while we scoop those puppies right up, okay? 'Bye...

**WE REST OUR CASE**

*"I'm going have to go out and pick up some* ***Wonder Woman*** *back-issues so that when he starts, I can know what's going on."*

—**Vantage** Art Director Mike Munshaw, after hearing about Byrne on **Wonder Woman.**

Wolverine™ & © 1995 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

FOUND!
17 YEARS OLD
AND HE DRAWS LIKE
YOU'VE NEVER SEEN!
A CREED TIME-LINE
Late 1994 Creed #1 Hall of Heroes
Early 1995 Creed #2 Hall of Heroes
June 1995 Creed #1 Lightning "retelling"
Sept. 1995 Trent Kaniuga's Creed #1 Lightning series launch
TRENT KANIUGA
NO, YODO. AFTER LIFE.
Creed is © & ™ 1995 Trent Kaniuga

High school senior Trent Kaniuga has been unearthed by **Vantage** as the next potential darling of the comics industry.

Kaniuga draws with an askew flair. Reading Trent's **Creed** is like reading **The Hobbit** for the first time, with stumpy characters in sweeping scenes. Having shown his work to some of our advisors, **Vantage** has quickly reached the conclusion that this is not just another indy book.

While **Vantage** doesn't expect **Creed** to become the top-seller in the nation, we do expect it to excel *in its category*. Among independent-style books **Creed** does stand out. Look for **Creed** back-issues to grow in demand among indy fans as monthly new issues increase in circulation.

**Creed** is the brainchild of 17-year-old Trent Kaniuga, a high school senior from Elkhart, Indiana. When Trent's not packing groceries at his part-time job, he's either at school or working on **Creed.** Trent turns 18 on March 31, 1995. (Happy Birthday, Trent!)

"By the time my Lightning work actually comes out, I will be 18," says Trent.

## ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED BY HALL OF HEROES

The first issue of **Creed** was published by Hall of Heroes in December with sales of over 7,000 copies. This tiny print-run has received rave reviews from retailers and fans alike. Trent has already received hundreds of letters — an unusual level of response for an independent.

The second issue of **Creed** is due out now from Hall of Heroes. These first two books are the first appearances of **Creed.** Hall of Heroes is a smaller pub-

Creed is ©& ™ 1995 Trent Kaniuga

lishing house run out of Trent's homie town of Elkhart, Indiana. In fact, it's made up of a bunch of high school friends who actually had the drive and intelligence to find financing, arrange production, and acquire distribution.

For **Creed** though, Hall of Heroes is history.

## SNAPPED UP BY LIGHTNING

"Lightning Comics is pleased to announce it has been granted future publication rights for **Creed**," says a Lightning statement. Lightning will "retell" the **Creed** #1-2 miniseries from Hall of Heroes in its own **Creed** #1. Lightning's 48-page **Creed** #1 will be exactly the same as Hall of Heroes' **Creed** #1-2, with a various tweaks and changes.

In the Lightning version, the books will be professionally re-lettered (Hall of Heroes' lettering leaves a bit to be desired), there'll be all-new covers, an artist's sketch book, perhaps some pages replaced, higher paper quality, and much of the artwork tightened up. Trent feels he was a little rushed the first time around and he is looking forward to improving upon his already impressive work.

One out of every ten copies of this new **Creed** #1 will be a gold variant edition. We highly recommend it.

The ongoing series launches in September under the sage title, **Trent Kaniuga's Creed.** One out of every four **Trent Kaniuga's Creed** #1s is scheduled to be a variant. The series has already been plotted out to eight issues by Trent.

## LIGHTNING FOUND CREED IN CATALOGS

"I had first seen **Creed** in the distributor catalogs and asked a retailer friend to order me a few copies," said Steven Zyskowski, Vice-President of Lightning Comics. "I thought **Creed** sounded fresh and different — unlike anything else being published today. After reading the first issue in December, I was amazed! It was obvious that Trent was a natural."

Zyskowksi says he instantly saw the potential that Creed could become the next "darling" of the comics world. "Initially, I telephoned Trent to congratulate him on his comic and discuss the possibilities of doing a crossover with Lightning. The next thing I knew, we're on board as the new publisher of Creed!"

Trent says that he actually was the one who asked Lightning for distribution.

## A BOOK THAT WON'T JUST SIT

Trent's book is well-rendered, the writing is strong, and it will appeal to people of all ages. **Vantage** believes that Creed will quickly find a loyal market. We expect this book to fly at cover and to gain back-issue value as well. As always, remember, you read it here first.

# TEKNO NABS FRANK MILLER COVER

As **Vantage** had hinted in months past, we have now confirmed that comic book legend Frank Miller will provide pencils and inks for the cover of the first issue of **Mickey Spillane's Mike Danger**.

The cover will also be unusual in that it will be mostly black and white with the silhouette of a large swastika on the left-hand side. The book could be a sleeper.

Keep in mind that it was a few Frank Miller covers on some Valiant titles that originally helped lift Valiant to stardom. We hope that Publisher Tekno•Comix can get Miller to do a few more covers for the series.

According to a Tekno statement, when asked about similarities between Sin City and Mickey Spillane's books he said," As far as the Spillane reference... I would never deny. He's my favorite writer and he's bound to have a big effect on how I approach this stuff."

Miller said he "devoured" Spillane books as a kid. "The plan I had from the beginning for the first Sin City was to take Mike Hammer a step further."

When Mike Danger, a hard-boiled private eye of the 1950s, wakes up in the year 2045, the peace-loving citizens of the future are given a violent history lesson in 20th-century crime fighting.

**Mickey Spillane's Mike Danger** #1 due out in May.

Mickey Spillane's Mike Danger™ & © 1995 SIG Entertainment

# IS THE WAL-MART "REIGN OF TERROR" OVER?

Fleer has promised to drastically reduce the number of "mass-market" only chase cards and subsets, as detailed in a Fleer statement.

For years, retailers and show dealers have complained that the better chase cards often end up in Wal-Mart or similar stores, so that those stores get better ratios and better pricing in appearance. In response to the complaints, Fleer appears to be moving in a more retailer-friendly direction.

"...we heard the hobby loud and clear. Everything that we offer to the mass market, we will also sell direct to card and comic stores," explained Jim Glover, Fleer's Vice President of Marketing.

"[There will be a] drastic reduction in special 'mass market' subsets and/or chase cards," the statement promises. "If there are special mass market subsets, chase cards or other special cards, a limited supply of cases of these products will be offered to comic and hobby retailers on a first-come first-served basis while supplies last." Fleer underlined the "If" in that sentence, not us.

This policy is slated to begin with Marvel Metal, a beautiful set of cards with [illegible] quality that just shot up a few pe[illegible] in our books. Way to go Fleer.

# FLEER TO TAKE DIRECT ORDERS FROM RETAILERS

A new direct buying program for retailers bypasses distributors, offering Fleer products in small quantities by way of mail order. The program takes place in time for Marvel Metals, and it available to retailers only.

Dealers will now be able to order direct from Fleer. According to a Fleer statement, the new trade terms will be as follows:

- New, smaller case sizes — 4 to 6 boxes per case. In addition to Fleer's regular 10 to 20 box/case size, smaller cases will be offered. Actual case configurations will vary for each product.
- Drastic reduction in mass-market subsets and/or chase cards (see Wal-Mart article)
- Visa and Mastercard will be accepted for payment. Fleer will also take checks or money orders. Checks will not be cashed until two weeks prior to shipment.
- Priority shipping. All comic- and hobby-dealer orders will be shipped on a first come, first served basis. Shipments will not be based on geographic location.

"Smaller cases make every release accessible to smaller stores," explained Jim Glover, Fleer Entertainment's Vice President of Marketing. "Moreover, these cases will sell through faster and make room for new products."

"Credit card payment and delayed check cashing will help [illegible] cash flow difficulties endemic to this class of trade," said Glover.

The hitch? For the distributors, it's a big one. They're out of the loop. Fleer will sell direct to the dealers through ads in industry publications.

For more on this important event and how it will affect your Marvel Metals cards, see the

Iron Man art™ & © 1995 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

# OUCH!! MARVEL CUTS DEEP!!

Bullseye™ & © 1996 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

Marvel will be cutting down to about 65 monthly titles by the end of summer, according to sources close to the company. Marvel currently publishes about 100 titles per month.

All three **Punisher** titles are to be cut. Once Marvel's backbone, **Punisher** sales have taken a dive in recent years. A final crossover called Punisher Countdown will be a 5-part story with Jae Lee covers. **Punisher** #104, **Punisher War Zone** #41, and **Punisher War Journal** #80 are all final issues.

Other final issues: **Blade** #11, **Blaze** #12, **Conan Classic** #11, **Conan Saga** #98, **Darkhawk** #50, **Guardians of the Galaxy** #63, **Morbius** #32, **Namor** #62, **Night Thrasher** #21, **Nova** #18, **Savage Sword of Conan** #235, and **Warlock & the Infinity Watch** #42. **Fury: Agent of SHIELD** will be a four-issue mini instead of an ongoing monthly. **Conan the Adventurer** #15 is the last issue of the series, but in June look for a new series with the short and sweet title, **Conan.**

In today's smaller market, these cuts are no surprise, but some of the details certainly are. If Marvel were to cut their 35 worst-selling books, they'd wind up cutting everything under rank #225 or so on the best-selling comics list. But that's not what they're doing.

Several books above the #225 rank are being cut. Some examples with their recent rank (courtesy of Capital City Dist.): **Guardians of the Galaxy** #59 (rank 141), **Conan The Adventurer** #11 (rank 178), **Blaze** #9 (rank 213), **Darkhawk** #50 (rank 176) and all of the **Punisher** books (ranking in the 140s).

We have to believe that a new **Punisher** title is on the horizon. Circulation for the three **Punisher** titles added together reaches as high as **Flash** #100 with its impressive rank of 33. There will be a **Marvel Edge Unlimited** #1 in July that features the Punisher, we are told.

**Vantage** has also heard rumblings that **Silver Surfer** has been cut, but we are unable to confirm.

# DARK HORSE TO BRING BACK NEXUS

*by Katherine Duncan*

Nexus is coming this March to "reclaim his rightful title" earned in 1980, according to a Dark Horse Comics release.

**Nexus: Wages of Sin** will encompass four issues by original creators Mike Baron and Steve Rude, whose original series won Eisner, Manning, Kirby, and Harvey awards. But this time, Nexus has bucked his alien controllers and has control of his own raging power.

"He's no superhero, he's no role model, and he's not the guy next door," says writer Mike Baron. "He has great powers; powers he doesn't necessarily want, but powers he needs to assassinate the murderers who haunt his dreams."

The new series spins tales of the familiar Nexus veteran readers know, plus adds new and improved facets for the enthrallment of new and old readers alike. Each issue, a story in itself, will introduce a side of Nexus and his world that no one has seen before.

Kicking off the series is "The Client," which ships March 28.

# CLAREMONT'S SOVEREIGN 7 FINALLY DUE OUT!

**Sovereign 7** will be the first ongoing monthly series from Chris Claremont since he left his highly-successful thirteen-year run on **Uncanny X-Men.**

**Vantage** has already had the opportunity to read a photocopy of **Sovereign 7** #1 which is due out in May. The book is phenomenal. The art is excellent Image-quality work from Dwayne Turner. The story reads like Claremont X-Men.

In fact, this book is clearly directed at the X-Men market. It looks like X-Men, it reads like X-Men, it smells like X-Men, but it's not X-Men.

The **Sovereign 7** are the last survivors of an inter-dimensional event that decimated almost all levels of existence. When their alternate universe was overwhelmed, fate threw them together and placed them in our reality. Each was an heir to a ruling family on his or her old world.

The seven are: Cascade, who moves through time and space; Network, a powerful telepath; Reflex, a telekinetic flyer; Rampart, a gentle man with great size and strength; Finale, a woman who uses he beauty as a weapon; Indigo, a master of disguise; and Cruiser, who possesses an unstoppable force.

DC's big baddie Darkseid will be making an appearance in the first issue. The team will be fully integrated into the DC universe (Can you say "Wonder Woman crossover"?). Lots more on this in our next issue.

Sovereign 7™ & © 1995 Chris Claremont

*The book is phenomenal. The art is excellent Image-quality work from Dwayne Turner. The story reads like Claremont X-Men.*

# THE X-MEN ARE BACK!

## AGE OF APOCALYPSE WRAP-UP

May wraps up the mega-event of the Winter. **X-Men: Omega** #1 ties it all together with another chromium cover for $3.95. A week later, **X-Men Prime** #1 will ship with the same format and price, introducing "major plot lines" for all the X-books.

The X-Men will return to our reality and most things will be as they were, including issue numbering. However, three fugitives from the alternate timeline survive and the victory of the X-Men will not come without a price.

Look for these two big chromium books to at least hold value for the time being.

## X-MEN IN YOUR FUTURE

The intro books to watch: **Wolverine** #91, which picks up where super-hot #90 left off; **Generation X** #5 (see below); **X-Men** #42, which "sets the stage for '95"; **Uncanny X-Men** #322, the flagship X-title which continues the story from **X-Men: Prime** #1.

Four beings from "After Xavier" are to journey to our timeline. This will hopefully keep the Age of Apocalypse back-issues moving.

## GENERATION X HAS NEW MEMBERS

One of the hottest Marvel books out there is **Generation X** #1, as **Vantage** predicted. A series with real long-term potential ("Not your father's X-Men" — The Wise Rembert Parker), **Generation X** gets two new members in issue #5 in May. These will likely be first appearances. Given the heat for this series in general, a dealer who picks up a few #5s will certainly not be throwing his money away.

Beast™ & © 1995 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

## ASTER #3 HAS VARIANT COVER *(SURPRISED?)*

*Katherine Duncan contributed to this article*

Don't worry that you weren't first in line to get the **Aster** #3 variant cover from Entity Comics — no one else was either. Less than 7,500 copies were packed up reasonably and shipped out with the variant version without prior notice (unless you read **Vantage** #8).

The variant cover, labeled #3a, has a gold-foil-enhanced cover image of **Aster**, pictured with active companions Shaiana and Ghayab. But that's not the only thing special about it.

"While many companies have been offering variant covers lately, we wanted to do something extra, so we put a coupon offer for a free **Aster** phone card on the back cover of the book." The coupon is redeemable for a full-color phone card featuring Aster, drawn by Oliver Isabedra. It can be used for up to three minutes of long-distance calling.

The phone card and the variant cover combined makes issue #3a "especially hard to get," according to Don Chin, Entity Comics Publisher.

Of course, if you've been reading **Vantage** you knew about all of this months ago. Pardon us while we gloat a bit more. Ahhhhhh. Yes, that's better.

Entity plans to follow up the four-issue **Aster** mini-series in May with an **Aster** #0 issue, featuring a George Perez cover.

# WILDSTORM CROSSOVER!

# WINDSOR-SMITH TO DO ELEVEN COVERS!

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## WILDSTORM RISING: TIMELINE AND ANALYSIS

The WildStorm Rising May crossover kicks off with a one shot and then continues on in ten books, all due out in May. All eleven are to have Barry Windsor-Smith covers:

**Team 7 — Objective: Hell**
**1) WildStorm Rising #1**
**2) WildC.A.T.s #20**
**3) Union #4**
**4) Gen 13 #2**
**5) Grifter #1**
**6) Deathblow #16**
**7) Wetworks #8**
**8) Backlash #8**
**9) Stormwatch #22**
**10) WildStorm Rising #2**

Look for interest in **Gen 13 #2** to make readers go back for **WildStorm Rising** books. Crossover is a dirty word today, but if anybody can get away with it, it's WildStorm and their incredible sales machine.

In fact, WildStorm says you'll need to read all or most of the books to get what's going on. This is a highly unusual move in the 1995 market.

The **Vantage** crystal ball is swirling with gas and color again. Here's what we see: **Gen 1 #1** takes off like a rocket and #2 doesn't fall far behind. Readers of #2 will be told that they've just picked up part four in a giant crossover. Some #2 readers decide they'll go back to try to figure out what's going on. The books they'll most likely want: **WildStorm Rising #1-2, Team 7 — Objective: Hell, Union #4, and Grifter #1.**

Also, keep an eye on **Deathblow,** which usually has the lowest sales numbers of all of the titles in the crossover (with a usual rank of around 50 or so — not bad for the worst seller, eh?). The **Union** book may be most promising since it leads right into **Gen 13 #2** and it is generally the second-worst seller in the crossover after **Deathblow.** Exactly how demand will fall will depend on more of the details. Stay tuned.

## WILDSTORM PRODUCTIONS ANNOUNCES WILDSTORM PICTURES

Announcing the next giant step for WildStorm Productions: WildStorm Pictures, which will pro-

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duce animated movies.

"This is the next logical step for WildStorm," said company president Jim Lee. "Superheroes just translate so well to animation."

"For years, everyone's wanted to see a comic book character adapted to animation with as much guts as the original comic," added Kevin Altieri, director of WildStorm Pictures's first project, "but Jim Lee is the only guy who's doing anything about it. This isn't like children's programming, where you have to pull your punches. This is the real thing."

So what *is* the first project? Animation of none other than **Gen 13,** one of the hottest comics on the market for most of 1994. The animated movie will adapt the whole series directly from the books.

Altieri certainly has the resume to bring something special to **Gen 13.** His previous projects include *Batman: The Animated Series, The Real Ghostbusters,* and *Alf,* as well as serving as a development and concept artist on Disney's *Lion King.*

The **Gen 13** animated feature is scheduled for release in early 1996.

*Crossover is a dirty word today, but if anybody can get away with it, it's WildStorm and their incredible sales machine.*

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# TEKNO PROMOTION NOW HITTING!

Tekno•Comix split-cover books are now hitting the racks, as **Vantage** predicted.

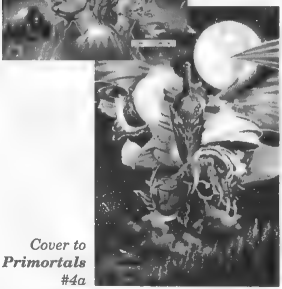
**Primortals** #4, **Lost Universe** #4, and **Mr. Hero** #4 each come with cover splits of 20%/80%. The 20% versions come with trading cards and the 80% versions come with coupons that can be combined and turned in for a steel **Teknophage** #1. This book will be all foil embossed.

The three cards each feature Teknophage, and each has a design similar to a Flair card, with "UV" coating and gold foil. The three card titles are: Teknophage, First Appearance of Teknophage, and First Feeding (featuring Teknophage).

**Vantage** forsees a nice level of heat potential for these books that many people are likely to overlook. **Primortals** #4 and **Lost Universe** #4 should already be out as you read this. **Mr. Hero** #4 is due out now.

*Cover to **Mr. Hero** #4a*

*Cover to **Primortals** #4b*



*Cover to **Primortals** #4a*

*Cover to **Mr. Hero** #4b*

All Covers ™ & © 1995 DIG Entertainment

## VANTAGE QUICKIES

*Artwork from* ***Action Comics*** *#710*

### ACTION COMICS #710 LOOKS GOOD

The Death of Clark Kent storyline may be attracting interest where the Superman's casket story did not. Quite a few calls have come into **Vantage** HQ with questions from fans about the Death of Clark Kent.

One book that stands out from the pack of D.O.C.K books is **Action** #710 (part 3 of 7), with a really neat cover. Basically, it looks like Lois Lane gets rather graphically blown away on the cover.

Here's what DC says about #710: "The Man of Steel rockets back to find Lois Lane before the enemy, who knows his secret identity can strike. But just as he arrives, a bomb is detonated, and Superman is devastated when he realizes he's failed to save his one, true love."

If DC really kills off Lois in the pages covered by this delicious eye-candy artwork, the book could do quite well. Story by Dave Micheline and cover by Jackson Guice, two well-respected heavies.

Plus, this issue kicks off a new, coated paper for **Action Comics** and a higher $1.95 cover price, still low for after-market purposes.

### ACCLAIM COMICS TO PUBLISH NEIL ADAMS COMICS

Neil Adams, who is generally regarded as one of the best artists ever to work in comics, will be offering three new miniseries titles through Acclaim Comics.

Adams' former publishing house, Continuity Comics, was in the running for "hot" status before the glut. However, it fell short due to lateness problems. **Vantage's** first question of Acclaim (formally Voyager): Will Adams' three titles come out on time?

"Yes," said Marketing VP Marty Stever, "all three books are totally done." That is, "they're not almost done, they're done," said Stever. All three miniseries are already penciled, lettered, and inked in their entirety.

Look for old characters from the Continuity universe, featured in brand new stories and art. Only the pencils are from Adams. Due out in May: **She-Bat** #1-2 and **Knighthawk** #1 of 6. Later on, look for **Samuree** #1-4.

### ASTER #0 TO FEATURE ORIGIN

**Aster** continues to burn up in the shops that carry it, but many have yet to discover it. Just today **Vantage** spoke with one retailer who didn't carry Aster and another who was blowing out gold #3s for $10 each. **Aster** #0 will probably garner more readers, but will still fall far short of a heavily-printed run.

This book's credits are impressive: A George Perez cover, the origin of Aster, foil enhancement, but no artwork by Isabedra. Still we expect easy sell-through and nice after-market potential.

### GODWHEEL: VANTAGE IS RIGHT AGAIN

You may remember when **Vantage** hinted that the final issue of **Godwheel** would be the issue to introduce Thor to the Ultraverse. We now have confirmation that it is the final issue, **Godwheel** #3, that brings the first Marvel hero into the Ultraverse.

## VANTAGE QUICKIES (continued)

### DARKSEID/GALACTUS CROSSOVER

John Byrne is working on a **Darkseid/Galactus** crossover, **Vantage** has learned. That's all we know. We have no dates, no nuthin'. But hey, we couldn't just have that first sentence as the whole paragraph, so we stalled for time. And now here we are, four sentences later. Pretty cool, eh?

Darkseid™ & © 1995 DC Comics

### SECRET DEALS IN THE WORKS?

The word among insiders is that some publishers are quickly negotiating with some distributors for exclusive distribution arrangements. We have been unable to confirm.

The premise here is that the only way for a store to get some or all titles from Z publisher would be through Y distributor. Retailers would be forced to order their comics from more than one distributor. These new exclusive arrangements would take place as part of an effort by distributors and publishers to respond to Marvel's acquisition of Heroes World, the third-largest distributor.

### NEW COSTUME FOR SPAWN

Spawn is to get a new costume in a few months in **Spawn** #32. This issue will also sport a six-page introduction to a Spawn miniseries that begins in June from Alan Moore and Tony Daniel.

Spawn™ & © 1995 Todd McFarlane

### ALAN DAVIS TO DO LEGION COVERS

Alan Davis has agreed to become the regular cover artist on DC's Legion titles, **Vantage** has learned. We understand he is working on other things for DC as well.

### JYHAD NAME TO CHANGE

Jyhad will return in the Summer of 1995 with a new title, Vampire: The Eternal Struggle. The game is produced by Wizards of the Coast, makers of the top-selling Magic: The Gathering.

The game is vampire-oriented, and the title change is designed to make consumers aware of this. The game's rules will also be simplified, but Vampire: The Eternal Struggle is 100% compatible with existing Jyhad cards. The game will maintain the green marble look and the Jyhad symbol.

## VANTAGE QUICKIES (continued)

### JUSTICE LEAGUE AMERICA #100

The heavy promotion for DC Universe 100s continues this month. This appears to be one of their major ongoing marketing techniques for the year.

**Justice League of America** #100 will feature every active member of the JLA and the Extreme Justice team, as well as a number of "shocking revelations," says DC. As a #100 from a major DC title published during this period of low-print runs, this is a book that should at least hold at cover for show dealers.

The Collector's Edition features a holographic foil-stamped cover and the Standard Edition is to feature its own illustration.

The League in this issue opens its headquarters to super-heroes throughout the world. But the renewed Lord Havok seizes this opportunity to strike at the Justice League. Plus, the secrets of Power Girl's mysterious child are revealed.

Justice League of America™ & © 1995 DC Comics

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### GLORY #2 UNDERPLAYED

The difference in the level of promotion given to **Glory** #2 by Advance and Previews is a classic situation that could lead to serious market reaction.

**Glory** #2 is a "Hot Flash" in **Advance Comics** #76, with full-color artwork and a strong push. In **Previews**, the book is listed in a text-heavy column with no supporting artwork. Retailers who order from **Previews** could be caught short on this Mike Deodato book.

### VEROTIK SHAKE-UP

Verotik Editor-in-Chief Valerie Jones has resigned and left the company. Verotik is the new publishing house that has shaken up the comics world by offering titles with rare Frank Frazetta art.

The production staff working under Jones also left the company. Jones said she left due to differences of opinion as to the "direction" of the company.

## VANTAGE QUICKIES (continued)

New Warriors art™ & © 1995 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

### SCARLET SPIDER JOINS NEW WARRIORS

You don't have to be Destiny to see this one coming. True to the almighty dollar, the Scarlet Spider joins the **New Warriors** with issue #61. As **Vantage** predicted, it appears we're going to have two Spider-Men for quite some time. Long established as the team book for heroes that have nowhere else to go (**Defenders** lost the job years ago), **New Warriors** gets Ben Reilly this issue. Or is that Peter?

### RUNE HAS ADAM WARLOCK'S SOUL GEM

Marvel's Adam Warlock has lost his soul gem. Rune, the energy vampire from Malibu's Ultraverse, has embedded it in his own forehead. "Finders keepers," said Rune writer Chris Ulm of the story.

It's all part of the **Curse of Rune** storyline that picks up where **Rune/Silver Surfer** #1 left off. **Curse of Rune** will be an ongoing monthly title where Marvel's Soul Gem has a savage effect on Rune.

The first issue of this title will come with two separate cover versions. Each may be ordered in any quantity desired. When placed side-by-side, they form a single image of Rune drenched in blood.

Due out in May.

Rune™ & © 1995 Malibu Comics

IF IT CAN HAPPEN TO THE X-MEN IT CAN HAPPEN TO VANTAGE
THE ENTIRE VANTAGE STAFF IS KILLED IN THE FAST! WHO DOES THE DIRTY DEED? FIND OUT IN
VANTAGE
#1
VANTAGE COMIC & CARD PICK UP NOW! COMING SOON!

## VANTAGE QUICKIES (continued)

### SCOTT TAKES OVER DEATHBLOW

Trevor Scott, WildStorm inker since **Stormwatch** #1, is the new penciler and inker for the comic book **Deathblow**, WildStorm Productions announced. His previous inking career spans from **Adventures of Superman** to **Team 7.** Deathblow will be his first regular series as a penciler, though he has penciled a number of pin-ups and trading cards.

As for previous **Deathblow** artist Tim Sale, who felt ready to move on to other projects, he is currently helping Scott through the transition to **Deathblow**. Scott inked some of **Deathblow** #12, has penciled most of issue #13 with Sale's input, and takes over as sole penciler and inker with issue #14. Sale will continue to contribute **Deathblow** pin-ups for several issues to come.

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### AUGUST HOUSE GETS PEREZ, SHI

**Foodang** #4 features a cover co-drawn by George Perez, something unusual for an indy book. Also, August House has been doing the coloring for Bill Tucci's **Shi.** The Shi Trade Paperback, for example, has a beautifully penciled cover from Tucci with breathtaking colors from August House.

Foodang © & ™ 1995 Michael Duggan

*Cover Art for **Foodang** #4 by Mic Duggan and George Perez*

### MARVEL MARKETING IN MAY

Marvel's plans for May for each of the seven "families" of titles:

- **X-Men:** "Return of the X-Men," with $3.95 **X-Men: Prime** as the lead-in.
- **Spider-Man:** The Trial of Peter Parker ends, who is the real clone?
- **Marvel Heroes:** A.I.M. disbanded in a big Avengers crossover.
- **Marvel Cosmic Powers:** Atlantis rising crossover, Malibu tie-in.
- **Marvel 2099:** One Nation Under Doom.
- **Marvel Edge:** Punisher final issues.
- **General Entertainment:** Bartman mini lauch, Ren & Stimpy Special.

## VANTAGE QUICKIES (continued)

### THE CLONE IS REVEALED

**Spectacular Spider-Man** #226 reveals which Peter Parker is real and which is the clone. Marvel announces: "...we're not kidding when we say Spider-Man will never be the same! Spider-Man's future starts here!"

The implication here is that Parker is the clone and Reilly is the real thing. Of course, this is the same Marvel that implied Peter might die in #400 (he does not). Marvel also implied that Spider-Man might die instead of Doc Ock (Nope). Marvel could fall short of the hype here too. Of course, if #226 does switch Spider-identities on us it will be one of the most important Spider-books ever published. It certainly wouldn't hurt to be there on comic day when this book comes out late in May.

### KAINE'S IDENTITY REVEALED

**Spider-Man** #60 reveals Kaine's true identity. Marvel's making a big deal out of this and we have this feeling in our bones about it. That's all. Just a **Vantage** feeling. This one's worth a peek at the shop.

### ZEN TV AND MOVIE

A Zen Intergalactic Ninja movie and television show are now contracted for. The movie is a live-action film due for release in about a year. It is being produced by Sceneries Entertainment of Beverly Hills under a $10 million budget, according to Zen co-creator Steve Stern.

The animated cartoon is being developed by Graz Entertainment, animator of X-Men and The Tick.

### SUPREME APOCALYPSE IN JUNE

Okay, **Vantage** wants to get this straight. Extreme Studios is publishing Supreme Apocalypse while Marvel puts out The Age of Apocalypse. Meanwhile DC puts out Extreme Justice and Black Out produces Extremes of Violet. There'll be a test on all of this later.

Supreme Apocalypse will be a four-part storyline "revealing all" about Supreme and Prophet, said Extreme spokesman Matt Hawkins. "Not too many people realize that both Supreme and Prophet have the same creator and therefore somewhat connected origins," Rob Liefeld told **Vantage.**

Supreme Apocalypse is due out in June.

Spider-Man™ & © 1993 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc

*Cover to* ***Spectacular Spider-Man*** *#226*

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OFFER EXPIRES JUNE 15, 1995.

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To thank **Vantage** fans for their support, Lightning Comics is helping **Vantage** to subsidize the cost of producing signed **Creed** #1s. To get the word out, we are making Lightning Comics' **Creed #1** available at the crazy price of $7.95!

Even for a new creator, this is a ridiculously low price, and **Vantage** is proud to offer it. Don't expect to see a price this low for signed Trent comics again.

Please note that orders for this item will not be filled until this summer since Lightning's **Creed** #1 ships in June. However, **Vantage** will not be making this offer again.

☐ Yes, I'd like *Creed #1*, personally signed by writer/creator Trent Kaniuga, limited to 750 produced by **Vantage**, with accompanying certificate of authenticity! I understand that if **Vantage** receives orders for over 750 copies, my coupon and money may be selected at random to be returned (I will receive a full refund).

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## SOMETHING NEW, SOMETHING ELSE NEW, AND STILL MORE NEW

Perhaps the best non-sports surprise of the year arrived with the February solicitations from distributors: a four-card promo sheet for the Marvel Metal Inaugural Edition cards. The imminent release of the Fleer Flair Marvel Annuals was nearly forgotten as collectors looked at this promo sheet — four cards that are completely metal-covered. The set is the first one in a long time to sell itself, and **Vantage** expects the excitement to build as the release date approaches.

The card set is 138 strong, an important first for Fleer: the number is finally divisible by nine. (Ever look at a set in nine-pocket pages? A set should not be 140 or 200 cards because it won't fit into sheets properly!) In addition, there is a chase set of 140 Silver Flashes that come one card to a pack — similar to the gold autograph cards in the Marvel Masterpiece set. True collectors will have no interest in the normal set; instead they will be putting together a set of the Silver Flashes. It may surprise you to learn what **Vantage** considers the most desirable card in the set: the Silver Flash checklist!

The next chase set appears once in every other pack. The Metal Blaster

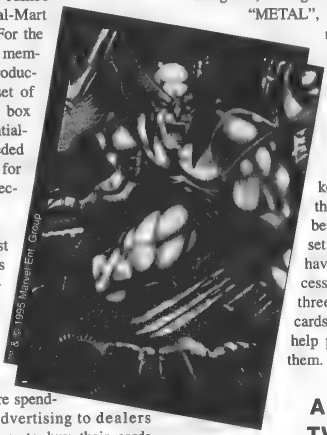
**Vantage Card Picks**

Marvel Metal Inaugural Edition
Todd McFarlane's Spawn Cards
David Cherry Fantasy Art

set is an 18-card set that includes six X-men, Venom, Spidey, and a number of significantly less important cards. The strange final chase card set is entirely unexpected: it's the 18 Metal Blasters redone with a Gold finish. These gold cards appear every third pack, making them still easy to collect.

The biggest pain for collectors lately has been the alternate chase card

sets available in Jumbo packs and Wal-Mart exclusive packs. For the first time in recent memory, Fleer is not producing an alternate set of chase cards! Any box of cards can potentially contain any needed card, a big relief for dealers and collectors alike.




The biggest news, however, is that Fleer is taking steps to make the cards more available at a cheaper price at a comic store near you. They are spending major bucks advertising to dealers to encourage them to buy their cards directly from Fleer at a reduced price (about 15% less than they would cost otherwise). They are encouraging stores to buy direct by offering smaller cases, accepting credit card payments, and requiring nothing more than a resale certificate from the store. This should result in more cards everywhere and more discounting than usual for Fleer cards. While this gives **Vantage** pause, the cards look good enough to sell through anyway.

Two other concerns need to be disclosed. The market hasn't reached saturation with Marvel cards yet, but **Vantage** can't help but wonder how long Fleer can release a new card set every other month before sales start to flatten out. The other concern is aesthetic: the insignias, a big stamp that screams "METAL", takes up an inordinate amount of space on the cards. Fans will no doubt overlook this deficiency, but some people may be turned-off.

One last thing to keep an eye out for is the binder that is being offered for this set. The last few binders have proved to be a success, and the presence of three frame-size metal cards in the binder should help push up demand for them.

## A TALE OF TWO CARD SETS

Rarely do we get to see such marked similarities and differences in the handling of a card set as we get this month in two card sets related to Image Comics characters. The two contenders are the Youngblood Trading Cards from SkyBox and the Todd McFarlane's Spawn Cards from WildStorm Productions.

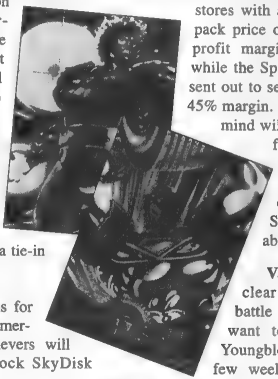
First up is the subject matter. While interest in Spawn may have peaked last Fall, the storyline in the Spawn comics due out in April calls for a new costume, which could help spark some additional interest. Interest in Youngblood, on the other hand, slowed years ago, and doesn't show much hope of revival (although the Extreme

Sacrifice crossover/make-over may help some).

Next is the cards' designs. The Youngblood cards are using the 24-point cardstock format used for Marvel Flairs and the FPG Jusko cards — thick, solid, and expensive. The Spawn cards are coming out in the oversized format used by the recent WildC.A.T.S cards — a size which provides better art space, but for which we still don't have decent supplies (no card boxes, no snaps, etc.).

Card counts: Youngblood: 90; Spawn: 150. Youngblood packs will have 8 cards plus an occasional sticker and come 24 packs to a box, while Spawn packs have just 8 normal cards and come 36 packs to a box.

Chase cards reflect the current trend that "more is better." Youngblood has stickers, wiggle cards, and the Badrock SkyDisk (one in every three boxes this time, a much more common occurrence). More importantly, cards for Extreme merchandise and other neat prizes (such as an all expense-paid trip to Extreme Studios) will be included. Spawn offers us a chance at 12 painted chase cards, four McFarlane chases, six photo cards featuring Spawn Merchandise, and a "Todd Chrome" card that features a tie-in to the new Spawn costume.



Both feature a bonus for dealers who order a case of merchandise. Youngblood believers will receive a CD-sized Badrock SkyDisk (similar to the Batman disk that sold for $50-$100 when it first appeared), while Spawn followers will receive an exclusive Todd Toys Spawn figure that **Vantage** expects to be the most valuable comic figure ever produced. While the CD-SkyDisk will come with each case, the Spawn figure will be limited to one per store, a much rarer commodity.

*Interest in Youngblood, on the other hand, slowed years ago, and doesn't show much hope of revival...*

Finally we have the price, and it is here that the two card sets are clearly different to a major degree. The Youngblood cards are offered to comic stores with an expected retail pack price of about $4 and a profit margin of only 25%, while the Spawn cards will be sent out to sell at $1.50 with a 45% margin. Who in their right mind will pay nearly $100 for a box of Youngblood cards when they can have a box of Spawn cards for about $40?

**Vantage** sees a clear winner in this battle — if you really want to get a box of Youngblood cards, wait a few weeks and you may

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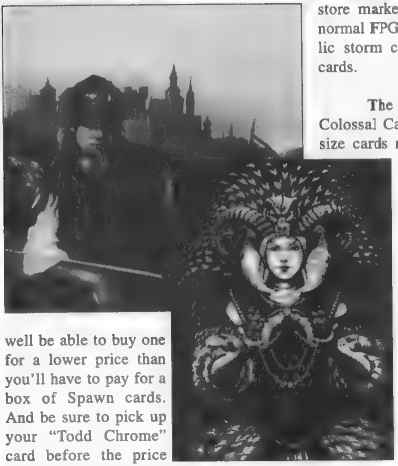


well be able to buy one for a lower price than you'll have to pay for a box of Spawn cards. And be sure to pick up your "Todd Chrome" card before the price gets out of hand!

## THE ART CORNER

FPG again offers two card sets this month, one new set and one set of reruns.

The David Cherry Fantasy Art cards feature artwork from another of Sci-Fi Fandom's favorites. David has been constantly honored with awards since he started doing art full-time, and the honors have been well-deserved. Art card collectors who are not familiar with his book covers should be pleased with the set. As with several of FPG's other releases, **Vantage** expects these cards to continue selling well at Sci-Fi conventions long after the normal comic store market has been exhausted. The normal FPG setup: a 90-card set, metallic storm chase cards, and autograph cards.

The riskier offering is the Colossal Cards Series 2. These frame-size cards measure 6.75" by 10", and should follow in the footsteps of the first set: non-existent box and pack sales, slow set sales, and brisk sales for single cards. Keep an eye out for the Kaluta Vampirella cards — the current market for her should boost the prices for any cards which feature her.

## SPECULATIVE CORNER

Milk Caps continue their uneven sales throughout the country, primarily to younger buyers. This month offers two boxes of caps that might finally bring the older collector into the hobby, and it might be worth paying attention to.

The first two sets of Coca-Cola cards included a Coke Cap in each pack, but they failed to do more than annoy collectors. Now Collect-A-Card is releasing the Coca-Cola Caps, featuring random slammers.

Topps is offering Star Wars Caps, featuring 64 regular caps, 32 inserts, and two slammers. Star Wars continues to heat up in popularity, and the chance to exchange caps for discounts on Star Wars-related merchandise may help

attract fans to these caps.

While there are no sure things in collecting, one thing **Vantage** can nearly guarantee: if Milk Caps ever do catch on, these two early sets will be extremely important (and expensive).

## QUICK NOTES

Comic Images offers two card sets based on comic characters — Phantom Collector Cards and Chromium Bone Cards. The Phantom has been in daily newspapers since long before **Vantage** personnel started reading comic strips, and at first blush would seem to have little market potential. But this card set is just the tip of the iceberg. Coming this summer: a movie, a comic series from Marvel, a toy line, and who knows what else? (Lunch boxes? Coloring books? Milk caps?) Given all the hoopla, these cards might have a wider appeal than one would normally expect, but everything will hinge on the success of the movie.

Jeff Smith's Bone has its own cult following, but the all-chromium card set which is on its way might be somewhat misaimed: the cards will have a suggested retail price of nearly $75 per box. News Flash: That's probably too much for any but the most die-hard collector.

Spellfire, the collectible card game from TSR, continues to sell at a steady rate, and this month brings us the latest expansion set: Artifacts. While there is no reason to expect massive price run-ups, the cards should sell through quickly as dealers continue to underestimate the game's long-term potential.

Finally, this month is sure to bring a chill to gamers everywhere as promo cards begin to show up for the latest Magic: The Gathering expansion set, Ice Age. Numerous magazines will contain various promo cards, some of which will be exclusive to specific magazines. **Vantage** warns players not to go crazy about these cards: they are not supposed to be different from the cards that will show up in the expansion set, so any price run-up should be temporary.



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2) _____

3) _____

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1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

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_____

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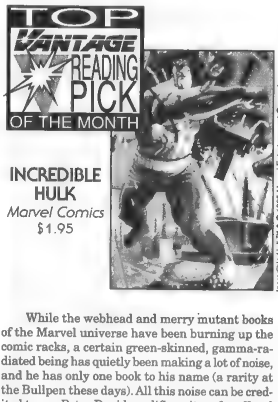
# COMICS ARE FOR READING First!

By Rich Keller




While the webhead and merry mutant books of the Marvel universe have been burning up the comic racks, a certain green-skinned, gamma-radiated being has quietly been making a lot of noise, and he has only one book to his name (a rarity at the Bullpen these days). All this noise can be credited to one Peter David, prolific writer of stuff and all-around nice guy. Of course I'm talking about everyone's favorite monster: The Incredible Man-Thing! Let me tell you a little bit about Man... Oh, excuse me for a minute... What? ...Man-Thing doesn't have his own book? ...Hasn't had one for years? ...How about the Incredible Swamp Th... Wrong company... Then who am I talking about? ...Oh...

Of course I'm talking about everyone's favorite monster: The Incredible Hulk (Man, I've gotta get these guys straight).

OK, Man-Thing has recently been in the comic. As well as Silver Surfer, Captain America, Nick Fury, The Leader, everybody's sidekick Rick Jones and his new bride Marlo, Doc Samson, Betty Bruce Banner, and of course Robert Bruce Banner. Well, at least his brain is, because it's currently encased in the Hulk's body. This is no longer the 'Puny Humans. HULK WILL SMASH!' Hulk. This version, which has been around for several years now, has the superhuman strength and day-glow green skin, but also has the intelligence and logic of Dr. Banner.

Those who don't read **Vantage** would probably believe this means no more action and intrigue, and that the Hulk and Betty have moved into the suburbs and set up a little general store. Wellll... how wrong they are. As a matter of fact, things are pretty much status quo in the Hulk's life. He's still trying to keep his anger in check, and, as of recent issues, he's on the run again after an unsuccessful stint at leading a group called the Parthenon. The Hulk's control over his anger has been a major plot thread since the combination of brains and brawn, and Mr. David has created an interesting Catch-22. Banner finally has the strength to control, yet he can't become enraged for fear of slipping back into his fragmented

*This is no longer the 'Puny Humans. HULK WILL SMASH!' Hulk. This version, which has been around for several years now, has the superhuman strength and day-glow green skin, but also has the intelligence and logic of Dr. Banner.*

sentence days. He's even been to a few therapy sessions to help. In a lot of ways, even though he's a monster, he's the most human of all "superheroes."

This brings up an interesting point. The Hulk has never been the typical "superhero." In the past, there was a very fine line in the book between those who were good and those who were evil. That line has all but disappeared. Credit for this can be given to the new Hulk. Now that he has a brain, he tends to rationalize. If he feels that it's the right thing to do, he'll fight for it till the very end — no matter how many toes he steps on. This includes fighting those in the superhero community.

The Hulk is no longer the story about one man's fight to control his anger, but a book about a man and the people around him who are trying to adjust. In a way it has become a comic book version of Beauty and the Beast (yes, I know there's already a comic version. I'm talking about the one without the singing silverware). The Hulk is one complex superhuman and will probably remain that way until Marvel ends the series. Till then, Vantage readers should go out and enjoy it.

I've been saving this review for a special occasion. Well, not really. I'm reviewing it now because I missed my deadline and I had to quickly scrounge up another comic to review. Eventually I would have gotten around to it. I mean, without the Man of Steel we probably would've been reviewing the 600th issue of Sugar and Spice right now. Superman is as much a part of American culture as mom, apple pie, and Chevrolet.

Granted, I wasn't a big fan of Superman comics back in the Pre-John Byrne days (although I was, and still am, a big Superboy/Legion of Super Heroes fan... go figure). But Byrne, Jerry Ordway, George Perez, and Roger Stern (in the early revival days), and Dan Jurgens, David Michelinie, Louise Simonson, and Karl Kessel have really put a lot back into the Superman comic family. Look what's happened in just the last few years: He revealed his identity to Lois Lane, proposed marriage to her, died, came back (with that hippie, long-haired look), saw his city destroyed, and saw it returned (courtesy of Zero Hour). Now his Clark Kent/Superman identity has been revealed to some of his greatest enemies and he's about to kill CK off to save those closest to him. Quite a lot to take in only the decade since John Byrne took over the character.

*Superman is as much a part of American culture as mom, apple pie, and Chevrolet.*

But, that's not the real reason for reviewing the books. There's also the way all of the books tie together to make one complete story. Group editor Mike Carlin has been able to get all of these writers to put together a coherent storyline throughout the four weekly books (and soon to be fifth quarterly series). This makes them easier to follow, and allows readers to wait only a week, rather than a whole month, to see what plot lines have turned.

But, that's not the real reason for reviewing the books, and this character. The main reason is simply this: Superman is possibly the last great "superhero." Now I'm sure my faithful Vantage public is saying that I'm insane and should be locked up for this statement. And who's to say I'm not writing this from Bellevue (although it would be kinda hard with the arm restraints and all). What I mean is, readers can definitely tell who's good and who's evil. When a character, such as Brainiac, has a plan to take over the world, readers know he's the bad guy, and that Supes is the one who will save the world from his evil grasp.

And that's the other thing about this book. Unlike some heroes who tend to be written as characters who care for their own welfare only, Superman forgoes his own safety for that of others. He's from a bygone era, when heroes fought for "truth, justice and the American way" and he hasn't changed through the decades, even when the country changed around him. In the writers' views, Superman himself comes second to those he protects.

So, there you have it, Vantage readers. The granddaddy of all superheroes is still fresh to this day. If you don't pick up at least one Superman comic, you may be missing out on a true 20th Century American legend. Hey, would I lie to you?

# *Trent Kaniuga's* CREED

Creed artwork ™ & © 1995 Trent Kaniuga

**VANTAGE:** *What comics do you read?*

**TRENT:** I've only been in comics for about maybe five years. I was highly influenced by Todd McFarlane for a while, when he was back on **Spider-Man.** I always really liked **Batman**. After a while, my interest started fizzling out, so I turned to independent books. I sort of learned to respect more where they're coming from. There is a lot more originality in independent work. Right now I think the best artist out there would probably be Silvestri or Keon. I read **Pitt**, but that comes out so rarely.

**VANTAGE:** *Yeah, people say it's an annual.*

**TRENT:** Yeah, it is. *(Laughter)*

**VANTAGE:** *So, your comic* **Creed** *is based on an ancient legend?*

**TRENT:** Well, it's based on a concept that in early Indian times they had a thing called a dream catcher. They believed that good and bad dreams would float around in space. They had these little things called dream catchers, sort of like a dream web, it looked like a web... a circular thing with webbing in it, with a hole in the center. You would hang it over where you sleep and it would catch all the bad dreams. Over time, all of those bad dreams

*Seventeen-year-old* ***Trent Kaniuga*** *offers an interesting new ongoi[ng] [th]r[ough] Lightning Comics co[mic] **Creed.** T[rent]'s C[reed] has impressed numb[ers] of "fanboy" letter writers, Lightning Comics and now Vantage. **Creed** isn't for everyone, but if you like indepen[dent] [com]ics at all there's a pretty good shot you'll love **Creed.***

Creed ™ & © 1995 Trent Kaniuga

are collected and built up. It would catch all of the bad dreams and the good dreams would just pass through it. So you would only have good dreams.

**VANTAGE:** *And these dreams will eventually relate to* ***Creed?***

**TRENT:** Mark Farley (Creed) is a kid about thirteen years old. Mark is a dream cleaner. He cleans out the evils from the dream worlds. He gains the companionship of this frog who is a talking frog. The frog is his companion who leads him through it all. At the same time he's trapped in a comic and he knows that. All of his friends are going to be growing up eventually and he's stuck at 13 because comic heroes never grow up.
**VANTAGE:** *Where do you go to school?*

**TRENT:** Elkhart Memorial High School.

**VANTAGE:** *What classes are you taking?*

**TRENT:** Right now I've got an advanced art class which is just two hours of working on my book. Basically, they let me do that sort of thing. I've got a sculpture class. I love doing sculpture stuff. Recently I did a sculpture of Creed and it just turned out so great. It was the first sculpture I ever did, but I actually won an award for it in the Scholastics Art Competition, which is a nationwide thing. Business class is like seeing how everyone else had fun, and that's sort of depressing.

**VANTAGE:** *What do friends and family think?*

**TRENT:** My friends are so incredibly supportive. I base a lot of the character on them. My parents and family, they sort of go along with it. They've gotten used to it. I'm always drawing.

*All of his (Creed's) friends are going to be growing up eventually and he's stuck at 13 because comic heroes never grow up.*

**VANTAGE:** *Do people understand that this is something that can make money?*

**TRENT:** I don't know if they know that. They have this attitude that, 'well, this is what he does. I'm proud of him for that. Pretty sure he's gonna keep on doing it.' For a long time my mom was trying to convince me to be a TV repairman or something. Then I finally got paid a little bit of money for **Creed** and I started showing that there really is money in it. They see the potential of the work, but I have to explain to them that its not the kind of job where you're guaranteed pay. So it's very elastic.

**VANTAGE:** *Do you plan to try to do this full time when you graduate?*

Creed ™ & © 1995 Trent Kaniuga

*For a long time my mom was trying to convince me to be a TV repairman or something...*

**TRENT:** I'm going to probably stick with my part-time job so I can still get a weekly income and make a little extra off my books and go to college off of that. I'm really interested in film school. That's just something I would love to do, animation.

**VANTAGE:** *Have you shown* **Creed** *to classmates?*

**TRENT:** I just walk into school and throw it up in the air. It's not like I get a lot of publicity for it, and I'm not exactly the coolest guy in school you know. Sort of the underdog.

**VANTAGE:** *How does it feel to be published by Lightning?*

**TRENT:** By Lightning? We'll have to see. *(laughter)* Right now I'm really excited about it. I go to sleep at night and I can't go to sleep. I'm as happy as I could be about that.

**VANTAGE:** *Were you surprised when Lightning Comics called you?*

**TRENT:** Actually, they called us offering a crossover deal. I had heard of them before, but I hadn't really been following their titles. I

Creed artwork ™ & © 1995 Trent Kaniuga

just presented them with the idea, after I saw one of their books, "How interested are you in **Creed?**" He said, "I love the book." I said, "Hey, wanna publish me?"

**VANTAGE:** *Will you really give away all of your artwork to the first 25 letter writers as it says in your first issue?*

**TRENT:** To really grab people's attention you really have to do something for them. Besides I love mail so much. I've gotten way more than 25, for a print run of seven thousand. I have fun with it. I don't want to just keep my artwork in a box and let it rot when I could be making somebody out there happy.

*If I could get my hands on an original Todd McFarlane page I'd do whatever it took...*

If I could get my hands on an original Todd McFarlane page I'd do whatever it took. All I ask for is a letter. That seemed to work really well.

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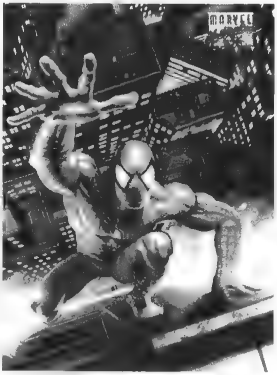
# THE VIEW FROM OBLIVION

*By Corey Bond*




Spider-Man™ & © 1995 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

A few issues back I wrote a column about Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. purchasing Malibu Comics, wherein I whimsically described Marvel's corporate policy as being based on the motto "Whoever dies with the most toys wins." Bound and determined to prove me right, Marvel reciprocated by purchasing Heroes World Distribution, which is the third-largest comic book distributor after Diamond and Capital.

This move by Marvel has set the comics industry on its ear. The buzz these days seems to center around what Marvel plans to do with their own comics distributor. The theories run the gamut from escalating Marvel World Domination Schemes to complacent business-as-usual scenarios. Typically, rumors have rushed in to fill the void of information.

Of course, Marvel has only themselves to blame for that void. After the Malibu purchase, I remember receiving about a four-page press release from Marvel over the fax machine.

The press release about the Heroes World acquisition was barely half a page. I think this falls into the "Anything you say can and will be used against you" category of information dispersal.

Personally, I see a trend in Marvel's recent corporate maneuvers. First, they pulled their licensing away from outside manufacturers, opting to produce Marvel Comics-related merchandise (posters, T-shirts, etc.) themselves.

Using the imprint "Marvel Made," they promised higher-quality merchandise for fans and collectors, the inference being that Marvel could produce better collectibles than the companies to whom they had been licensing their characters.

Second, they experimented with Marvel Mart. Stockpiling the more popular (and thus, best-selling) Marvel comics and graphic novels (**Future Imperfect**, the **Gambit** mini-series, etc.), they offered them to the public through mail-order ads within their comics rather than making them available to retailers for in-store sales.

Now they have their own distribution company. Marvel would seem to be acting on the policy, "If you want something done right, do it yourself," whether or not it actually applies to them.

*"This move by Marvel has set the comics industry on its ear."*

So what's the next step? They're already publishing their own comics and manufacturing their own knickknacks, so it must be time to begin distributing those items themselves.

The obvious solution? **Marvel Distribution, or M.D.** for short. I can see their slogans now: "M.D. — The cure for what's ailin' the comics industry." "The Doctor is In." "M.D. — Come see how the doctor operates."

In other words, since they can't sell more comics, they have to make more money from the comics that they are selling.

Furthermore, since Marvel has to share the market pie with numerous other comic publishers, at least now they can get a piece of everyone's action by distributing those publishers' books.

Sure, Heroes World is presently a small operation, a regional distributor that only services comic shops from Maine to Virginia. But Marvel stated in their press release that the Heroes World operation will be expanded to provide both national and international distribution to comics retailers worldwide. I say they zap Heroes World with a little gamma radiation and it will hulk out into the incredible Marvel Distribution company.

What would the comics industry be like with Marvel Distribution? It's difficult to foresee what changes would arise. It's likely that even if M.D. became the "exclusive" distributor of Marvel merchandise, that would not mean Marvel would stop selling to other distributors. Why lose money by turning away your largest customers, like Diamond and Capital? M.D.'s "exclusivity" would simply mean that the maximum discount on Marvel books would only be available through M.D. Getting Marvel books from other sources would cost more.

Also, M.D.'s policies might include hefty minimum orders that could only be met by the cream-of-the-crop retailers. I doubt that Marvel would care to do business directly with every single little comic shop in America.

At the very least, M.D. would give the current Marvel sales force something to do. Currently, retailers complain that Marvel's regional sales representatives serve no legitimate function, and never seem to know as much about the current state of Marvel Comics as the retailers themselves.

With something like M.D. off the ground, Marvel reps have hinted that the sales force could be expanded. The aforementioned field reps could be armed with company vans, an on-line distribution and reorder service, and a purpose in life. Comic shop owners could look forward to being visited by gaudy, superhero-emblazoned Marvel vans peddling expensive Carnage statues that they might not have been willing to order sight-unseen from the monthly catalog.

Some retailers are concerned that, even in a best-case scenario, Marvel's purchase of Heroes World means a lower profit margin on Marvel books. They don't expect Marvel to pass up this opportunity to cut themselves a larger piece of the pie.

Regardless of Marvel's specific plans for their new "toy," the purchase of Heroes World bestows them with some interesting benefits. Inside information on other publishers, for instance. All publishers negotiate the trade terms with their distributors on an individual basis; Marvel now knows what everyone's terms with Heroes World are, which was always "privileged information" before. Also, publishers report their upcoming editorial plans (storylines, promotions, crossovers, new series, etc.) to their distributors. So now DC, for example, will be giving Marvel advance notice of all their upcoming projects, assuming they want their comics to continue to be distributed to Heroes World accounts.

Running a nationwide distributor will also help Marvel get more information on comic stores across the country. Many retailers already fill out questionnaires for Marvel on a regular basis. Further input from them will allow Marvel to create in-depth store profiles with detailed accounts of customer demographics and

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Iron Man and Marvel Logo™ & © 1995 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

sales breakdowns. This information would be particularly useful to Marvel if they ever decide to open their own chain of retail stores.

It isn't difficult to imagine going to the mall and discovering a Marvel store, similar to the Disney and Warner Brothers stores that exist now. I can picture this happening one of two ways, resulting in a chain of either (a) independently-owned operations, or (b) corporate stores.

The first scenario would involve Marvel beginning an advertising campaign to persuade existing comic retailers to "Be a Marvel Store!" Marvel would make the proposition sound juicy, offering such incentives as exclusive merchandise, promotional packets, in-store videos, merchandise racks, etc.

Once they signed up, these retailers would no longer order Marvel merchandise per se, but would begin to receive weekly pre-packs. The merchandise contained in these pre-packs would be determined by the comic shop's Store Profile Rating.

The pre-packs would be a no-risk, fully returnable proposition, since a retailer couldn't be held responsible for merchandise he didn't actually order.

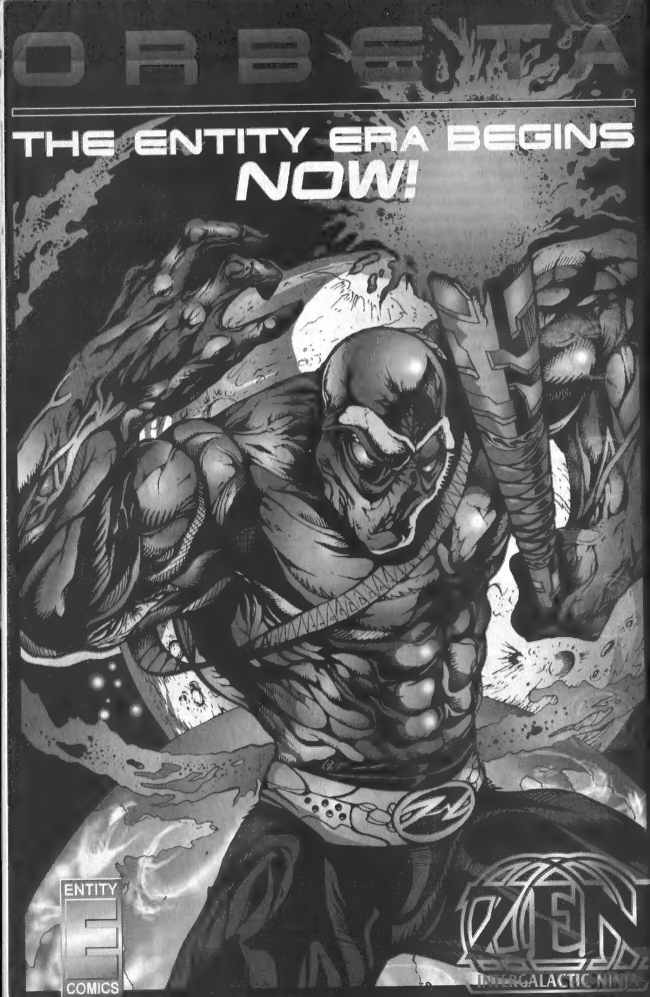
The second scenario would consist of corporate stores fully owned and operated by Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

While I would not decry Marvel stores as being evil in and of themselves, I would hate to see them replace the traditional comic shops that thrive on diversity. I read a few Marvel titles myself, but when I go to a comic store I want to see racks of Independents: **Cerebus, Bone, Hepcats, Wandering Star, A Distant Soil, Strangers In Paradise, Ironwood,** just to name a few. If this trend continues, we may find ourselves walking into McMarvel's and ordering an X-Men Combo with fries.

*(Corey Bond, Oblivious Columnist, wonders why Marvel, when they are taking such a beating in the arena of public perception, doesn't hype more of the good things they're doing for the industry, like whittling away at the glut by canceling approximately 35 percent of their titles.)*

*"I say they zap Heroes World with a little gamma radiation and it will hulk out into the incredible Marvel Distribution company."*

The Hulk™ & © 1995 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.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